

Challengers of the Unknown DCFS

by Keravin

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Summary: Late breaking news - Another member of the Infinity Corp is dead. Long Live the Infinity Corp. Take a step into the unknown

1. Default Chapter Title

Challangers of the Unknown :DCFS > <meta name="GENERATOR">

****CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN DC:FS ******

>Created by Mark Peyton
Written by Mark Peyton & Robin Sutton

>Edited by Mark Peyton & Robin Sutton **

****ISSUE ONE: LATE BREAKING NEWS****

"Continuing our documentary on the Infinity Corp. The team went through a troubled period after the accident that killed Flint. Cracks started to appear and the group went their separate ways. Hitman disappeared from sight, Flamebird swore never to fly again, while Lightning attempted to take part in Olympic competition. Comet has become linked with various vigilante groups, most recently in Fawcett City. Moonwing was killed in a gang incident in Chicago two years ago. And nothing has been heard of Thunder and Arikal. Lantern X and Scattershot meanwhile attempted to keep the Corp flying until the tragic death yesterday of Scattershot in a mid-air collision. How this will affect the group remains to be seen. This is Linda Trainor, hoping that this is not the last report she makes on this remarkable team."

Will Kalmaku watched the vidscreen as a montage of clips played past. The Speed records, Calcutta race, the Washington show: they all merged together as the clips ended on one final image - Scattershot's plane engulfed by flames. It was an image he didn't need to be reminded of. He could see it every time he closed his eyes. He sat slumped back in Carters, a Twentieth Century theme bar in Opal City. It had been their haunt when they'd been younger. When they'd been

the great Infinity Corp. They'd been so famous that they'd done action figures, though he'd always felt they'd got his nose wrong. At least the good thing about the hype going away was they'd stopped playing that blasted theme tune.

In his mind he wandered through some of the stunts he and Scattershot used to pull. It had started in one game of chicken. The difference being they used aircraft. When it became clear that neither of them would give in, it became a challenge to get as close as possible without collision. That's what he didn't understand about Scattershot's death. He'd never crashed in his life. He was too precise. Unfortunately, any evidence there was had been scattered across two counties, and was badly burnt. He sipped his drink and waited for the others to arrive.

Comet swooped over the heads of the muggers. "Nice trick," he thought to himself, "Using biowires to swing down from the rooftops and pick off their prey." But he was here to stop that. That was what he did. His jumpsuit was attached to a short pair of wings that extended from his flight harness. The shots bounced harmlessly off them as he hit out with his club. He caught one mugger, sending him spiralling upwards wrapped in the wire. The victim scurried out of the way as Comet activated the cutter on his left arm, slicing through the wire, sending the shooter crashing to the ground. Flying down to check he was unconscious, Alan flew up and collected the other would-be assailant. Using his own binder, he tied the two up and took out his "stamp," aimed it at the one who shot at him and tagged him with his Comet emblem. Nodding to the victim he flew upwards. This wasn't why he was in Opal - they have their own heroes for this. He wasn't here as Comet. He was here as Alan Carmichael, whose friend died yesterday. "I wonder if Joel is going to be here?" thinking of his older brother. He sped up his flight harness, as it hummed its alien tune to him.

David Fox glanced at his watch. It was 4.40. He was due in Opal no later than 5.00, and here he was sat in a bar in Washington. "No time for subtlety, this is a time for speed." he thought. Of course, this meant speeding from a stop to near Mach 1, and accelerating. He'd learned not to break the sound barrier in cities. It didn't make him very popular, and if they could prove it was him, then he generally received a court order prohibiting him from the city's limits. Not that he went this fast normally, it took too much out of him, but he did indulge himself occasionally, on important occasions. He headed close to Opal's outer limits slowing, dodging the mundane motorists. He should be on time. Good - he needed the help of his friends.

Natasha Rice moved along the pedway two stories above the bar where she was to meet the others. She walked slowly, her hood over her face. She wasn't sure how she was going to cope seeing them again. She'd had no contact with them since Moonwing's funeral two years ago, until Will had dialled late yesterday. Alan had tried to contact her, but she'd left his messages unanswered. She hated Dialscreens showing any caller her face, and used them as little as possible.

Still, she had to be here for Scattershot. Flint would have wanted her to do this. Strange how she called some by their names and others by their flightnames. She'd have to ask Will if he did the same.

David strolled into the bar and headed straight for Will. "I see you've bagged the old spot. You know, we're needing fewer chairs these days"

Will looked up "I know. Thunder told me where to get off yesterday, so I guess we're going to have to miss his delightful company. How are you, David?"

David smiled. "Knackered. I had to run here and it takes it out of me." He pulled out a chair and slumped into it. "Give me a while and I'll be running rings around you again."

Will nodded. "I'm sure you will. Now, don't you go baiting Alan. I don't want to have to stop a fight today, and Tasha isn't going to take any shit from either of you. You know that."

David shrugged "I know. I was always unsure who wore the flightpants between Flint and Tasha. Even before..." he paused "... she was always hardnosed. Can I bait Alan a little? He's so easy to set off."

"David, no! I'm not having it today. If you want to start, you can leave."

At that point Natasha walked in, her hood still up. She made her way over to the two. "David. Will. How are you?"

Will stood up, pulling out a chair for her. "Fine, Tasha. You?"

"As well as can be expected. Are we the only ones coming?" She said, sitting down slowly.

"No. Alan said he was coming. Thunder said ... Well you can guess what he said. Arikal is still nowhere to be found and Joel - well he's probably knee deep in some mess of his own making. I left a message, so we'll see." Will sat back down pressing the switch on the table. A robowaiter arrived. In perfect synthesised English it said "What would sir/madam like to order?"

They ordered their drinks and sat quietly avoiding the conversation about Scattershot until Comet arrived. He walked into the bar laden with a large bag, which he placed out of sight quickly. He nodded "Sorry I'm late. Spot of mugging."

David grinned. "How much did you make?" Will shot him a hard stare, and the grin faded slightly.

The others all nodded. Natasha asked him "What do you want to drink?"

And there they sat - four extraordinary people. The subject of many documentaries, an ill-advised cartoon and a truly appalling theme song. Three men and one woman were all that remained of the Infinity

Corp.

David Fox was a man of medium build and height. Not devastatingly handsome, he would have been overlooked if not for his personality. And the fact that he was now one of the fastest people on the planet. Alan Carmichael was broader, a classic set jaw, and his dark hair cut short. His clothes hid the scars he'd gained from his chosen role - that of a vigilante. Natasha Rice wore a simple coat and cloak that placed most of her face in shadow. Once the premier female pilot in the country, if not the world, she now was visibly upset even being on a plane, never mind flying one. Her classic looks were marred by the burns across her face, but her fiery personality still shone through. And Will Kalmaku, Lantern X, the founder of the Corp. A man that many would call hero, inspired to fly by his grandfather's friend. His Eskimo heritage still showed but his pleasant face was capped off by piercing blue eyes. His best feature, if you were to believe the many magazines where he appeared in the most eligible bachelor columns.

The four sat and talked of old stunts, harebrained jobs that had led into danger and old friends. All the men were careful of upsetting Natasha, and she knew it. David would start on a reminiscence designed to provoke Alan and Will would step in. It was like nothing had changed, but the numbers of them present. They'd sat in silence as the news once again played the footage of Scattershot's death, and again they were quiet as the news announced the sighting of a new Starman for Opal. They looked at Alan who threw his hands up in the air "Not guilty. I've got my own identity. I don't need to take anyone else's."

And as they talked the other three all became aware that Lightning was strangely subdued, until Will turned to him and asked "David - what is the matter?"

David smiled and said "I never could hide anything from you. I've got a favour to ask.... of all of you."

The three waited, and Will pushed the issue "Go on."

"I don't know if you all met my kid sister Susan." Blank looks from all present. "She had a lot of problems coping with Mom's death. I didn't realise how bad at the time. I wasn't around. I mean this was when I was trying to get into the Olympics." The others all smiled at this. David nodded his head "Well - it was worth a try. Anyway, she seems to have become involved in some sort of sect or other and I'm worried. She's not allowed any contact with the outside world, and I've heard some fairly scary stories about the cult."

Natasha looked at him "Which one?"

David sipped his drink "She's a member of the Golden Tide. Don't ask me how."

Alan looked at him incredulous "They're a bunch of lunatics. I've heard all sorts of supposed ritual murders connected back to them."

David turned to him "I know. Why the hell do you think I'm so worried? I need your help. All your help. I maybe fast but no way can I do half the stuff we can do when we work together."

Will propped his head against his hand and closed his eyes "Of course we'll help, David. We're your friends. I guess we'll have to get ourselves reorganised if the Infinity Corp is back in business. Everyone in?" He opened his eyes.

Alan nodded and Natasha did too, a little slower.

"Then we're agreed. OK - lets start talking business."

****NEXT ISSUE ****

The Infinity Corp go shopping in their own inimitable fashion.

Robin's Note:

Guys, I did little here. Almost all of this is down to Mark, mainly because I came on board with COTU very late. As time goes on, you'll see that I'm doing more and more though. Like Starman this series is a reissue of the old DCF series of the same name. All those who wanted to know where the series was going (and indeed, the second series is already boiling away inside our heads) must read on! And those of you who've read it before - sssshhhh!

See you next time!

Robin

2. Default Chapter Title

Challangers of the Unknown :DCFS > <meta name="GENERATOR">

The wind blew across the desert. The man stood on the watchtower looked out over the terrain, his bino-goggles settle watching a lizard catch a fly with its tongue. The fortress was secure - there was no one in sight. He returned to his scanning of the area.

Comet threw Joey the Spook against the wall. "Talk Joey - I want to know about the Golden Tide."

Joey slumped against the wall. "I can't tell you. They'll kill me."

"They aren't here Joey. I am. Want to talk, or see how you feel falling from six storeys up?"

Joey fell to his knees tears streaming down his face "I can't. I just can't." Comet looked at him. This was what they were all saying. The Tide held some sort of control over them so that even his threats had no effect. He hoped the others were having better luck.

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ISSUE TWO: SETTING UP SHOP

Natasha sat in a specially prepared room. The walls were soundproofed and daubed in various symbols. Someone once described magic as being able to immerse yourself in the surroundings, going past the obvious. Natasha didn't consider herself a mage. She had some limited successes as a medium, but the person she looked for she'd never found - Flint. She sat cross-legged, concentrating on listening.

David sat in his hotel room looking out onto Opal City. He said to the vidscreen "Put me through to Chuck Schwartz on Sports Today." The screen buzzed slightly and a slim, bronzed, blonde haired man answered, "Hello."

"Hi Chuck; it's David," David said, emphasising the British tones in his voice to compensate for Chuck's cheerful American sounding voice.

"Dave, what can I do you for?"

"Chuck, I'm looking for information on the Golden Tide. I know it's not your area, but I was wondering if you could put me on to someone who might know."

"Dave, the Tide are one serious bunch. Can I ask why you want the info?"

"It's personal Chuck. I can't really say, but any info I get would be appreciated."

"I'll see what I can do. Where should I get in contact with you?"

"Well, I've got my mobile, but any messages can be left at the Opal Towers."

"Opal City eh? Any reason you're back on your old patch?"

David smiled and shook his head. "No, I just sort of gravitated here. Don't go reading anything into that."

Chuck smiled back. "Perish the thought."

"Bye Chuck. I'll be really grateful if you can dig me anything up."

Will walked into his office and closed the door. Though he was serious on the outside he was exceptionally happy. He shouldn't be. David's sister was in danger and his friend was dead. But for the first time in such a long time he thought they could make a difference. Not just him, but "they." The Corps were back. He'd better not get too excited. They had to get the job done, and quietly. It wouldn't do for the press to catch on to this. It was

almost certainly illegal, and they could do without the Press following them in as they did it. First things first. They needed information, and there was one person he could guarantee to know it. He'd let the others go off and do their own thing because he was sure she'd didn't want everyone to know about her. Plus, she could help him with another little problem he had. He opened the safe and reached into to pull out the small transmitter. Only a few trusted individuals around the world had one of these. He keyed in the code and waited.

A little while later a female voice came over the transmitter.
"Lantern, how can I help you?"

"Addie, I was looking for some information and assistance"

"Were you now? What on precisely, William?"

"The Golden Tide."

"An interesting little group. What in particular did you want on them?"

"I need the location of their bases. A friend is in danger. I also need some transport of high quality to get me there."

"You don't ask a lot do you? I will send the information along the usual lines. I trust you find it useful."

"Well if you don't know it then it's probably not useful. Thanks again."

The transmission ended and Will smiled. Well hopefully that was one problem out of the way. Only six million to go.

The room swelled around Tasha, and though she was locked away alone, voices spoke to her. Two in particular seemed clear today. One whispered the name Walter, the other June. They seemed to be married.

A DAY LATER

The team had come out to some location that Lantern had said housed a plane for them. It was when they got there they realised how they were going to get the plane. All of them were used to working covertly. They'd done enough of it when they'd done secret assignments when they were still the high-flying Corp. But still stealing from a powerful company like Tech Style made even them pause for thought.

Tech Style were one of the more powerful security Corps. No one said it out loud, but it was generally known they were a Military Supplier - an Arms Corp. They prided themselves on having up to the minute armament, with better than state of the art just around the corner.

Will explained how they were going to approach this. Flamebird and

Lightning were going to deal with sensors and guards, while Comet and he went into the facility. Flamebird set up shop with her high powered sniper rifle approximately two miles from the site. She sat adjusting herself, watching her targets. The gun was to be a little different in her hands because Will had demanded she use stun-darts. As she waited, the voices spoke in her ear.

Lightning started his approach towards Tech Style Research Lab Delta, generating a field around him. He might not be able to run that fast all the time but the lightning bolt had left him with other abilities. Such as being able to mess up sensors by interfering with their signals. He felt weird in the uniform Will had made him wear so as to not divulge his identity. He'd explained that he'd developed the ability to vibrate so photos and cameras couldn't get an image. Just something he'd learned to wind up journalists. He went in smoothly smiling to himself, humming the Dambusters' theme from an old vid he'd seen.

Will watched his team move in. He trusted Adeline's information. They should be able to do this easily and quickly. And anonymously, which was the main thing. He signalled to Comet that they should begin their approach. As the sensors started to short out, Comet started to rise, his flight harness activated. This felt good to Will. They were acting well together. He just wished Scattershot was here so he could see it. He aimed at the lasers that were producing the perimeter, waiting for Comet to begin his descent.

Flamebird shot at the first guard who'd taken an interest in Lightning's dust trail. He flinched, then dropped to the ground and she moved her aim to the next target. The sensors blew apart along Lightning's trail and he spied cyberdogs moving towards him. Smiling, he continued whistling taking the doggies for a run. Comet hovered over the laser field and dropped a small cylindrical object down into the field. He pulled down his visor as the field flared, with Lantern continuing to pick off individual lasers quickly and without fuss. The team all moved, and accomplished their jobs quickly without any of them saying a word, excluding Lightning's humming.

The laser field was down quickly and Lantern and Comet advanced into the plant, the soft whoosh of Flamebird's stun darts in the air as she took down guards left, right and centre. Lightning seemed to enjoy taunting the dogs. Will held his gun up looking around, signalling for Comet to move forward. Comet slowly moved towards the hangar doors and took a small package from his belt. He adjusted it, his back slightly to Lantern. Comet whispered, "I take it subtlety is out the window". His voice was masked by a modulator. Lantern nodded, pulling down his visor.

Comet attached the package to the door and moved back around the corner with Lantern. He braced for the explosion, hoping he hadn't miscalculated the charge. The door blew inwards, the hole smooth. Lantern spoke quietly into his transmitter, "Speedster Point C". No sooner had he said it when Lightning zoomed through the door heading for the control panel inside. The security protocols seemed to have started and Lightning quickly fixed Comet's jammer to the panel in the hope that this would override any security devices. As he waited impatiently for the device to kick in he looked over the plane, their goal.

The Xero-A2 was quite an impressive looking vehicle. Sleek and black,

it looked the part of a Stealth Plane. Lightning had half-heartedly listened to Lantern explaining what exactly the plane could do. Even when he was flying he hadn't been interesting in the technical aspects of the planes, just in how fast it got him to where he had to be. Speed was the thing. He'd heard mention of various little tricks it could do but he was sure he'd get one of the others telling him what a wonderful machine it was. They just didn't get he wasn't interested. How could he be. He only wanted to run. Comet and Lantern advanced into the hangar as the security devices stopped their descent. Will smiled looking over the plane. Outside he could still hear Flamebird's rifle dealing with any guards who took too great an interest in the proceedings. Lightning ran around the plane impatiently as Comet flew over to it and started to work to open it. Lantern focused back on the door in case anybody got past Natasha. So far so good. Lightning was still winding Comet up, but at least they were getting their jobs done. And Tasha was doing brilliantly. He dreaded her getting onto the plane when they had to go after the Tide. He just didn't know how she was going to react.

He looked over at Comet. "How is it going?" he asked taking care to mask his voice. Comet had built them all voice modulators which varied the modulation so that if there were any security devices listening they'd have a hard time deciphering their voices.

Comet looked back. "Stand back, it's opening."

The hatch to the plane started to descend. Lantern looked over his new toy. It was a test plane so he couldn't be sure how many of the bugs they'd got out of it. When Addie had told him about it, it was like a dream machine to him. VTOL, stealth technology, a limited AI (which they were going to have to deal with as it may not like its new masters) and loads of Meteorological equipment. They just might have to deal with Tech Style in the future. The main thing was to get the plane, get out of here, and get David's sister.

The hatch hit the floor and Will started to walk up it. Comet behind him. They felt a rush past them as Lightning ran in, to collapse on one of the chairs. Will glared at him. "What if there was a trap on board?".

Lightning shrugged. "There wasn't and I'm exhausted."

Lantern shook his head and made his way to the cockpit as Comet sealed the door. He pressed the button for the hangar doors on the control panel, which slowly started to open. Lantern settled into the pilot's chair as the engines started up. He spoke into the transmitter. "Sniper, get out of there. We'll meet you at the rendezvous".

Outside Tasha nodded as the message came through, packed up her rifle and made her way quietly but urgently far away from the lab.

The plane started to rise as Comet got into the seat next to Lantern. "Looks like we've done it, doesn't it?"

"Yes it does." Lantern smiled. "First thing we've got to do is check for surprises on the plane before we use it."

"Agreed. I've set up a jammer so we can talk normally now. David is sleeping back there. Do you think Tasha will be OK?"

Will paused for a second. "She's going to have to be. I know it'll be hard, but we need her."

Comet looked down. "I just wish she'd open up to us."

"She never does, and she never has. The only person she ever did was Flint and she's still hurting over that."

"We all are."

Back at Tech Style Research Lab Delta the guards started to awaken, and began shifting through what had happened. Only one real clue remained. The device used to shut down the anti-theft measures in the hangar.

**NEXT ISSUE **

The Corp in action as they go after the Golden Tide. John Woo action as Schuyler Bush once described it. Plus more dysfunctional antics with the Corps. All this and the secret of the Golden Tide.

This issue was written to the sounds of Octopus- From A to B
>And various Beautiful South songs. <p>

We're still looking for some lettercolumn title suggestions and maybe a few letters to put in here. Don't forget to read Starman DCFS and Sandman DCFS which seem to be veering towards a crossover. Hmm do you reckon Robin and I can write together. Might be tricky.

See ya next time

Mark

3. Default Chapter
Title